Unit .28

Session .02

Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Scripture

Acts 3:1-7,11-20

1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple
for the time of prayer at three in the afternoon. **2** A
man who was lame from birth was being carried there.
He was placed each day at the temple gate called
Beautiful, so that he could beg from those entering
the temple. **3** When he saw Peter and John about to
enter the temple, he asked for money. **4** Peter, along
with John, looked straight at him and said, "Look
at us." **5** So he turned to them, expecting to get
something from them. **6** But Peter said, "I don't have
silver or gold, but what I do have, I give you: In the
name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"
7 Then, taking him by the right hand he raised him
up, and at once his feet and ankles became strong. …
11 While he was holding on to Peter and John, all
the people, utterly astonished, ran toward them in
what is called Solomon's Colonnade. **12** When Peter
saw this, he addressed the people: "Fellow Israelites,
why are you amazed at this? Why do you stare at
us, as though we had made him walk by our own
power or godliness? **13** The God of Abraham, Isaac,
and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified
his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied
before Pilate, though he had decided to release him.
14 You denied the Holy and Righteous One and
asked to have a murderer released to you. **15** You
killed the source of life, whom God raised from the
dead; we are witnesses of this. **16** By faith in his
name, his name has made this man strong, whom
you see and know. So the faith that comes through
Jesus has given him this perfect health in front of all
of you. **17** "And now, brothers and sisters, I know
that you acted in ignorance, just as your leaders
also did. **18** In this way God fulfilled what he had
predicted through all the prophets—that his Messiah
would suffer. **19** Therefore repent and turn back, so
that your sins may be wiped out, **20** that seasons of
refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,
and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed
for you as the Messiah.

Intro Options

Main Point:
We are called to meet people's earthly and spiritual needs.

Option 1

Your students have been enlisted by a local English Language Learners school for help. They are trying to teach American English idioms to their students. One of the expressions is, "I'll do you one better." I'll do you one better means you're going do something even better for someone than he or she originally asked; for instance, someone might ask to try your ice cream, but you say, "I'll do you one better!" and buy the person his or her own bowl.

Your students' job is to create a short skit simply demonstrating the concept of "I'll do you one better." At some point in the skit, someone needs to say, "I'll do you one better." Let them prepare and then show their skits (if some students would prefer to create a comic strip, allow them to do so).

Segue into the lesson by telling students today's story involves a "I'll do you one better" incident; a man who was lame will ask Peter and John for money, but they will "do him one better" by healing him in the name of Jesus.

Option 2

Your students should get into small groups to put together skits. They will all start with the same premise: three guys (or three girls, or some combination) somehow run into a genie. The genie is not the world's most powerful genie; he can only grant each of them one wish, but when he grants them a wish, he must also take something away. The first person requests to be the world's most eloquent speaker; he or she wants a tongue that would put Shakespeare to shame. The genie grants the wish, but he takes away the person's physical strength; the person is superbly eloquent, but is incapable of almost any physical exertion and is largely invalid. The second person requests to be the world's strongest and most flexible person; he or she can do almost anything humanly possible. However, the genie takes away the person's ability to talk; he or she is super strong, but now mute. Finally, the third person declines his or her opportunity for a wish; he or she would rather stay as he or she is.

Your students' job is to create a "life in the day of" skit for each of the three characters. They can come up with original settings to make it more fun. Let them prepare and show their skits. Discuss how each characters' lives were different. Ask them which of the three people they would choose to be. Segue into the lesson by explaining that in today's lesson, we'll see that the Holy Spirit empowers us both to speak and to act in the name of Jesus Messiah. Peter and John do a miracle, and they use that miracle to expound on the excellence of Jesus. In the same way, we should have both (like the third person) Spirit-empowered words and Spirit-empowered actions in our witness.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Acts 3:1-7.

There have likely been times when we have forgotten the Holy Spirit's power, and instead of relying on Him, we lived as though we had to carry all the weight by ourselves. But Scripture tells us we can't:

- Life is more than we can handle on our own.
- We're inadequate to save ourselves.
- We could never carry out Jesus' mission on our own.
- This is why He gives us the Holy Spirit!

Imagine being like this man born unable to walk. His whole life, he lay on the ground and begged passersby to share. This man certainly experienced physical suffering and felt the ridicule of those who saw him as worthless. But worse, there was a sense of spiritual shame.

When Peter and John walked by, they didn't have any money, but they claimed to have something even better. Surely the man who was crippled was skeptical. But when he was healed, he knew that they had spoken the truth—not only in regard to his legs, but also his heart. As this man entered the temple, leaping and praising God, people recognized him and were amazed.

This passage is incredibly encouraging, specifically that, by the power of the Spirit, Jesus' work continues through His disciples. We may be tempted to see a story like this and wish we could do exactly the same things. Often if we don't see miraculous results every time we share the gospel, we are prone to be discouraged. But we don't produce results. God does! We're simply called to follow His call on our lives—sharing the gospel and showing real love. When we do this, we'll often see the Spirit impact others in real ways.

- **When have you been discouraged or frustrated because you shared the gospel or prayed for someone, but didn't see immediate results?**
- **How does the Spirit work through Jesus' disciples today?**

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 16, DDG)

Inspiration of Scripture

The inspiration of Scripture refers to God's direction of the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded His message to humankind in their original writings (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). Occasionally this inspiration was achieved through dictation, where God spoke directly to the original authors. Most of the time, however, this inspiration was achieved through the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit through the personalities of the authors so that their writings can be considered the very words of God.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
We are called to meet people's earthly and spiritual needs.

Read Acts 3.

"The healing of the crippled beggar offered confirmation of the truth of the gospel that the apostles were preaching. It is thus not surprising that it generated opposition from the religious authorities. The crippled man was one of the lowest of the have-nots in that society, unable to work for a living and only able to beg for money from people like Peter and John, who were coming to worship at the temple. These men who received power from God never used that power as if it were their own but referred the power to God from whom they received it; for the power itself could never have any force except through the name of Him who gave it. And so both the apostles and all the servants of God never did anything in their own name, but in the name of Jesus."[1]

3:3 "Peter and John had recently been involved in an evangelistic effort which brought thousands to Christ. Now God tells them, this one lost sheep is just as important to him as the thousands to whom they preached at Pentecost."[2]

In Defense (p. 18, DDG)

Many Christians would claim that it is our responsibility to focus on the spiritual needs of our non-believing neighbors—and they are right. However, at times, we may become imbalanced in our views concerning meeting physical and spiritual needs. Some Christians devote so much of their energies to meeting physical needs that they never get around to sharing the gospel, and though they serve others in practical ways, they never address their greatest need of the gospel. Others focus so heavily on the spiritual needs of others, they come across as lacking compassion and being unconcerned with the real-life challenges people face every day. The truth is that God is grieved over all the effects of sin, including the suffering people face in the here-and-now. He desires to use the church to minister to peoples real needs. He is also—and ultimately—concerned with people's being relationally separated from Him because of our sin, and calls us to preach the gospel to all. We must follow Peter's and John's example of, from a heart of love and compassion, meeting others' practical needs while, with patience and grace, taking advantage of opportunities to leverage that rapport for sharing the gospel.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Acts 3:11-16.

Those who saw the man leaping and praising God were blown away, but Peter and John made it clear that the crowd shouldn't be amazed at them. Rather, it was the power of God working through them that healed the crippled man.

When we share the gospel, when we serve our neighbors, or when we see years of prayers answered, we should never take the credit for the results. We simply rejoice in the name of Jesus. Just like Peter and John, we should refuse to take credit, instead we must glorify the only One whose name has the power to save (Acts 4:12-14).

We may be tempted to question ourselves: "Do I know the Bible well enough to share the gospel? Is my heart even in the right place?" There's good news! Though we're called to a high standard which we can never fulfill on earth, Christ has taken this burden off of us. He obeyed perfectly, and when we call on Jesus' name, we know that the Spirit works through us to accomplish Jesus' mission.

God's mission doesn't happen by accident—we must choose to engage. He doesn't want us to try to earn salvation, but he does expect us to take up our cross and follow Jesus. Through the grace He extends, we bear Jesus' name and pursue His mission. All the glory belongs to Him.

- **In what ways might you take the credit for God's work in your life and the lives of others? How can you glorify Jesus instead?**

Read Acts 3:17-20.

Jesus aimed His sharpest critiques at the Jewish religious leaders—they had access to the Scriptures, they were the experts, and they should have recognized the promised Messiah who fulfilled the Scriptures. Jesus had asked them, "If you know the Scriptures, why don't you realize who I am?" (Luke 24:25-27). Peter repeatedly made this point. If we understand God and His Word, then we will accept Jesus. The Jewish religious leaders knew the Scriptures, but it didn't translate into their loving God and receiving Christ.

God doesn't simply want us to know the Bible and have good theology. He wants us to love Him in a way that leads to obedience, which involves our carrying the gospel to all people. It's not about debating others' theology—we can't call others to repent and believe in Jesus while we're arguing with them. Of course, there are times where defending the faith is appropriate, but ultimately we say with Peter, "Repent and find refreshment in Christ."

Theology is about love—of God and others. As God's people—empowered by the Spirit to know Him and speak the truth—we are equipped to call others to repentance, pointing them not to ourselves, but to the true source of life.

- **How does your knowledge of the Scripture lead you to love God and others?**
- **How does your love for others translate in your sharing the gospel with them?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
We are called to meet people's earthly and spiritual needs.

Acts 3

"The power of Jesus Christ creates such amazement that it requires an explanation. This mirrors Jesus' own pattern, as He often followed miraculous healings with teachings on the nature of the kingdom of God. The miracles in Scripture should be seen not so much as models that we should seek to repeat but as evidence of divine authority for God's special messengers. As people marvel at the power of the apostles, Peter immediately renounces self-centered praise and redirects their gaze to Jesus Christ. Everything is about Jesus, whom God has glorified (v. 13) by raising Him from the dead."[3] "All they had to do to avail themselves of this salvation was to change their former attitude to Jesus and bring it into line with God's attitude. God had clearly declared his verdict by raising Him from the dead. Let them therefore repent and let them turn back in heart to God, and the salvation and blessing procured by their Messiah's death would be theirs."[4]

3:19-20 "A comparison with Peter's promises in 2:38 suggests that the Holy Spirit is the One who brings this refreshment. Peter may be describing the subjective effect of the gift of the Spirit for believers, whose presence anticipates and guarantees the full inheritance God promises his children."[5]

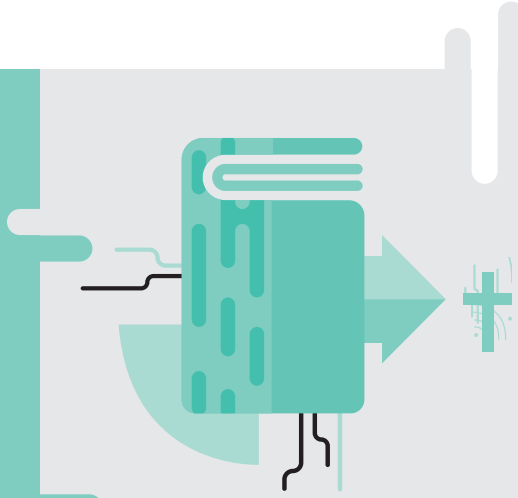
Activity

Your students should pretend they've been hired to create an advertising campaign calling people to repent. Students may create any idea for advertisements they can come up with. The campaign is "Repentance for Refreshing." Their advertisements should communicate the idea that Jesus offers something better than anything the world can offer, and the way to Jesus is through repentance, which leads to refreshing. Whatever they do, they should advertise the superiority of Jesus over the world and the refreshment that comes from repentance.

Let them prepare and then share their advertisements. Discuss how they can take these perhaps-cheesy ideas and share and show them in real life. Their advertisements covered the first and third point of the lesson, but when we live out and declare joy in Jesus and refreshment from repentance, we accomplish the second point of the lesson: giving glory and praise to Jesus.

(p. 17, DDG) Christ Connection

Once the Holy Spirit was given, the disciples began boldly proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit displayed the power of God's kingdom through the miracles the disciples performed in Jesus' name for His glory and praise.



EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 3:1-7, 11-20

EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

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JESUS CONNECTION

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

COMPASSION – Recognizing the suffering of others and taking action to help.

HEAD

Describe how Peter and John showed compassion to the lame man.

How did Peter explain the healing of the lame man to the crowd? How did Peter urge the crowd to respond?

HEART

The stories in the Bible reveal a God who shows compassion on both His people and His enemies. How might knowing how God acts encourage us to act with compassion towards others as He does?

Jesus said the two greatest commandments are “love the Lord your God” and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37–40). How would showing compassion fulfill these two commands?

HANDS

Pain and suffering exist in our world because sin has twisted God’s good creation, and God invites us to work with Him to help relieve that suffering right where we are. Brainstorm 3–5 practical ways you can demonstrate compassion to someone you know personally who is suffering or facing something hard right now. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you do them this week.